



Independent walking tour (SARD1)

Wild Sardinia

*Hiking along the spectacular east coast of Sardinia
Wild nature, ancient cultures & stunning beaches*



TRIP NOTES 2024

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****GENIUS LOCI TRAVEL - The Real Spirit Of Italy****



INTRODUCTION

The island of Sardinia has long been known for its dazzling sandy beaches and clear crystalline sea, and is immensely popular as a summer retreat not only for the happy few, but also the more ordinary tourist. Only recently its many unspoilt natural and cultural treasures have gotten the right attention from nature lovers. It is still possible to wander its many spectacular trails, enjoying the peace and quiet of a true hiker's paradise.

Your trip will take you to the heartland of the wild Supramonte region along Sardinia's east coast, without doubt the island's most spectacular area for trekking. Here sheer limestone cliffs coloured by wildflowers and the fruits of strawberry trees drop down vertically into the blue Mediterranean Sea, where little sandy beaches open up on vertiginous gorges. Small cultivated valleys carry the fruits of man's labour: above all olive groves and vineyards yielding splendid local wines. Wild animals such as wild boar, Sardinian wild sheep or mouflons, and many species of birds of prey, including eagles, roam the barren karst plateaus of the mountain ranges occasionally descending into the verdant valleys where lucky encounters with hikers are not uncommon.

During the first days of your trip you will explore the heartland of the Supramonte of Oliena. You can climb up to the high limestone plateau dominated by the area's highest peak, Monte Corrasi, and walk through the fragrant Mediterranean maquis along the towering cliffs of Punta Sos Nidos enjoying wide panoramic views over the valley of Oliena and the Su Gologone Gorge. You'll walk through the lush, garden-like scenery of the Oliena Valley with its many olive groves and vineyards producing the splendid local 'Canonau' wine. You then set off from the Nuraghic village of Sa Oche, with its sacred spring, through the unspoilt Lanaittu Valley in the direction of the mysterious Nuraghic village of Mount Tiscali. From here you will walk down to the amazing Su Gorropu Canyon passing through the 'Steps' of the Scala Surtana to reach the little town of Dorgali. Should you choose to have an extra day at Dorgali, you may well hike to the entrance of the amazing canyon and explore its first and most spectacular part, where the vertical limestone cliffs reach up to 400 metres high.

The next day you will climb up the side of the imposing Flumineddu Valley to Monte Tuili and the fishing village of Cala Gonone. Walk down to the sea along the spectacular Codula Fuili Gorge with its bizarre rock formations. Then travel on to Baunei, where you make a beautiful roundwalk on the Golgo High Plateau. Visit the Su Sterru sinkholes, some of Europe's deepest, before walking down along the rocky path to Cala Goloritze, dominated by its 75m-high Punta Salinas obelisk. Make sure you take your time for a refreshing dive, before walking up again along the Salinas plateau to your pick-up point at Golgo again. An extra day might see you walk down to the romantic bay of Cala Luna along the path that follows the bottom of the Codula di Luna Gorge. Finally you will walk from Santa Maria Navarrese on a wonderful path along the coast to the Pedra Longa rock and back again enjoying the most amazing views of the Coast of Orosei.

Your trip will take you on a discovery of the many natural and cultural treasures of one of the most impervious regions of the beautiful island of Sardinia, yet also offers the opportunity to enjoy some of the area's nicest beaches and most crystalline seas. An ideal mix of beautiful hiking and some lazy relaxation, topped off by Sardinia's fine traditional cuisine and strong honest local wines.



Please note: this is a moderately easy tour which is suitable for those who have some experience of walking and a good general physical condition. Most of the walks are on good paths, sometimes on steep terrain. Average walking times: approx. 4 to 6 hours each day.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 1 – Arrival in Oliena

Arrival in Sardinia. Travel to Oliena by bus (private transfer on request). After being transferred to your hotel you can freshen up and perhaps already make a short walk climbing up to the high plateau of Punta Sos Nidos, a perfect introduction to the wild nature of the Supramonte. In the evening you will enjoy a nice dinner based on local specialties in your hotel's restaurant.

Accommodation: Oliena - Hotel ***

Day 2 – Round walk Oliena

This morning you will walk through a wild limestone landscape, beneath the towering walls of the Supramonte's highest peaks. This vast area is an isolated land of shepherds, shaped by deep gorges and inaccessible peaks that are home to a rich fauna of eagles, mouflons, foxes, wildcats, and wild boar. From the mountain's flanks there are airy views across the high belvederes and karst plateaus of the Supramonte and into the fertile valley of Oliena. Halfway through your walk you will arrive at the beautiful Su Gologone spring, an opening in the limestone that is the only source of running water in the area. After a well-deserved lunch break you can choose to continue walking to Oliena or travel back there by private transfer. Walking back to Oliena, you pass through a pleasant agricultural landscape of olive groves and 'Canonau' vineyards. After crossing a small ancient bridge of Roman origin you then arrive at Oliena where you can freely wander through the old village centre before being picked up again for the ride to your hotel where you have your dinner.

Accommodation: Oliena - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 11 km. Approx. walking time: 4 h. Ascent & descent: + 200 m./ - 800 m. (several extensions possible)

Day 3 – Mount Tiscali & Sa Oche

After breakfast you begin your day with a short transfer into the valley of Lainaittu, past the grotto of Sa Oche. Here you can pay a visit to the amazing Nuragic temple of the Sacred Spring, discovered only recently. You then start your great day walk, which will bring you into the homeland of the Nuragic people. You start with a rough stretch up towards Monte Tiscali. The underground village of Tiscali, in a depression at the top of the mountain, is perhaps the most scenic archaeological site you will ever see! Then, through a beautiful gorge called the 'Steps' (Scala) of Surtana, you descend to the lush valley of the Flumineddu River. A few km. upstream this river carved out the Su Gorropu Gorge, one of the most impressive natural beauties in Sardinia. The gorge looks like a real canyon with dizzy heights up to 500m high. Strong walkers may want to take the extra walk up the river to go and marvel at the amazing gorge. After visiting the gorge you turn back to the bridge over the Flumineddu in time for your private transfer to your hotel near Dorgali. In the evening you will enjoy a hearty dinner and have plenty of opportunity to taste the heady local 'Canonau' wine.

Accommodation: Dorgali - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 9 km. Approx. walking time: 4 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 450 m.

Day 4 – Exploring Dorgali & the Codula Fuili Gorge

Today you walk from your hotel to the little town of Dorgali, well-known for its artisan tradition of wood and leather working. Then, from Dorgali, you climb up to the saddle of Monte Tuili where you can admire the whole of the Supramonte. You cross the saddle through an old rock-hewn tunnel and then start walking down towards the Codula Fuili Gorge. While walking through the fragrant Mediterranean *maquis* you will marvel at the fractured



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vertical cliffs of the gorge and be able to glimpse the dazzling white beach of Cala Fuili. Along your route you can also visit the remains of a tall nuraghe, situated on a natural panoramic terrace. A small path then takes you along the coast to the little village of Cala Gonone where you can relax on the beach and have an ice cream or drink before taking the local bus back to Dorgali where you can be picked up for your private transfer (optional) back to the hotel. In the evening you can relax with a nice aperitivo on the hotel's panoramic terrace before having yet another great dinner based on local specialities.

Accommodation: Dorgali - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 16 km. Approx. walking time: 4,5 h. Ascent & descent: + 400 m./- 580 m.

Extra Day

Today you walk to the amazing Gorge of Gorropu, sculpted by the forces of the Flumineddu River. From your hotel you drive down into the valley, to the trailhead of today's path, near the modern bridge over the river. Then you follow an easy path upstream along the river passing through the fragrant Mediterranean maquis coloured by wild flowers and the red fruits of the strawberry trees. Near the gorge you can climb down into it. Local guides explain the nature and geology of the amazing canyon and then you can explore this eerie wonder of nature on your own. Over huge boulders and through narrow passages you reach the point where the base of the gorge is only 5 m. wide! From here you turn back to the entrance of the gorge, and backtrack your route to your car and drive back to the hotel. Dinner is in the hotel's restaurant again.

Accommodation: Dorgali - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 13 km. Approx. walking time: 4-5 h.

Day 5 – From Dorgali to Santa Maria Navarrese

This morning you travel from Dorgali along one of the most beautiful roads on the island, with great views over the Gulf of Orosei and the bare Supramonte peaks, to the medieval church of San Pietro on the high plain of Golgo, above Baunei. From here you make a great roundwalk through an amazing, almost 'Far West' landscape. Your walk will take you past the great sinkhole of Su Sterru, and a number of natural ponds. From the high plain you then descend towards the coast along the magnificent gorge leading to the little bay of Cala Goloritzè dominated by its tall rock needle of Punta Salinas reaching up to a height of over 75m. Here you have time for a refreshing bath in the crystalline water where, up until a few years ago, monk seals still swam around. You then walk back up from the little bay to the Golgo high plain by way of the Serra Salinas, offering beautiful views of the coast towards Porta Quau. Through Mediterranean maquis and holm oak forest you reach the high plain again where you are picked up for the journey to Santa Maria Navarrese. Here you will spend the next two nights in a nice family-run hotel near the sea.

Accommodation: Santa Maria Navarrese - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 13 km. Approx. walking time: 4-5 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 600 m.

Optional Extra Day

You can spend the night on the Golgo highplain and the next day make a great round walk from there down to the beautiful small bay of Ispuligidinie (named after the white pebbles that look like 'snowflakes' in Sardinian language). This stunningly beautiful beach, commonly called the Cala Mariolu bay (named after the monk seal, the 'thief' of fish, in Neapolitan) can only be reached on foot (or by boat). You walk across the wild Golgo plateau, which sometimes resembles a Mexican desert, until the 'Arcobaleno', a natural rock arch, with wonderful views over the blue Mediterranean, far below you. Then a challenging descent (only for sure-footed walkers) leads down to the beach of Ispuligidinie. From here return trip by boat to Santa Maria Navarrese along high vertical cliffs over the crystalline sea. Or you walk back to your hotel and transfer from there to Santa Maria (or additional night on the Golgo Plateau). In the evening you are free to go out for dinner.

Accommodation: Santa Maria Navarrese - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 13 km. Approx. walking time: 4-5 h.



Optional Extra Day

On this extra day you have the opportunity to walk down the stunning Codula di Luna Gorge to the wonderful little bay of Cala di Luna with its dazzling white sandy beach. After breakfast you will be brought to the start of the walk near Teletotes, between Baunei and Dorgali. From here you walk all the way down to the coast, following a small trail running along the mostly dry stream bed. You will admire the most bizarre rock formations while walking between colourful oleander trees. At the end of the walk you arrive at the sandy Cala Luna Beach, an ideal spot for a refreshing swim. You will then be picked up by boat for the return trip to Santa Maria Navarrese, gliding past the high vertical cliffs over the crystalline sea. In the evening you are free to go out for dinner.

Accommodation: Santa Maria Navarrese - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 12 km. Approx. walking time: 4 h. Ascent & descent: + 80 m./- 250 m.

Day 6 – The Wild Coast south of Santa Maria Navarrese

Your last walking day is dedicated to the wild coast immediately north of Santa Maria Navarrese. After breakfast you walk from your hotel, through the village of Santa Maria Navarrese, to the trailhead of the path leading along the steep rocky coast in the direction of the limestone monolith of Pedra Longa. You will pass through fragrant Mediterranean maquis dotted with wildflowers and small shady patches of holm oak. During this part of the walk you will enjoy marvellous views of the spectacular coast of the Gulf of Orosei and the towering Pedra Longa. After arriving at the gigantic rock jutting out of the sea you can climb down to its base for some impressive views from below, before climbing up the quiet tarmac road to the mountain saddle dominated by the Monte Scoine and the Monte Oro. From here an incredibly panoramic gravel road takes you back in the direction of Santa Maria Navarrese. The view includes the whole of the bay of Arbatax with its coastal lagoons and red basaltic rocks, against the backdrop of the Ogliastra Mountain Range. At the end of the walk a short steep descent takes you back down to Santa Maria Navarrese. In the evening you are free to go out for dinner in one of the nice restaurants in the village.

Accommodation: Santa Maria Navarrese - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 15 km. Approx. walking time: 4 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 600 m.

Day 7 – Departure

End of the walking tour. After breakfast you travel by public bus on to your next destination. On request a private transfer can be arranged.



TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

Accommodation is mainly on a half-board basis in 3-star hotels and equivalent agriturismo. All rooms have en-suite facilities. Dinners are included except on day 6 in Santa Maria Navarrese when you are free to organise your dinner from the wide choice of restaurants in the village. No picnic lunches are included in the tour price. Materials for picnics can be purchased in the villages where you'll be staying or you can ask your accommodation holder to prepare a lunch packet for you.

UPGRADE/CHANGES IN ACCOMMODATION

It is possible to book an upgrade in some of the places en route. Details and prices on request.

INCLUDED

- 2 nights Agriturismo/Hotel in Oliena ***
- 2 nights Hotel in Dorgali***
- 2 nights Hotel in Santa Maria Navarrese ***
- Luggage transport throughout the tour
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1:25.000 scale (or better)
- 24/7 assistance
- Private transfers as specified

NOT INCLUDED

- Departure taxes & Visas
- Local Tourist taxes
- Travel Insurance
- Drinks and meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Optional additional tours or activities
- Tips
- Items of personal nature

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Moderate. In the standard programme there are some more difficult walks, which include some longer sections uphill, sometimes on paths with rough surfaces. Most of the trails are well maintained. Parts of the walks can be shortened and some longer options are available.

Fitness: High standard of fitness is not necessary but you should be able to walk for up to 5 hours a day, even in hot and dry conditions. Some shorter and longer options are available.



FOOTPATHS & WAYMARKING

Waymarking: Few trails are clearly waymarked, but they can easily be found using your route notes and maps.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in OLIENA. Regular long-distance bus services run from Cagliari, Olbia and most other major Sardinian towns and airports to Nuoro, connected to Oliena by regular local buses (taxi transfer on request).

Departure: The tour ends after breakfast in SANTA MARIA NAVARRESE. The return is most easily made by bus to Nuoro and then on to Cagliari, Olbia or any other major town on the island. A taxi transfer from Santa Maria Navarrese can be arranged on request.

TOUR VARIATIONS

It is possible to include extra nights in any of the towns en route. Tips for extra walking or sightseeing options can be provided as indicated in the day-to-day programme. Details and prices on request.

It is also possible to extend the tour with one or more nights in Santa Maria Navarrese, Cagliari or other places.

Fly-Drive & Hike

Of this tour exists also a so-called 'Fly-Drive & Hike' version, Sardinia – Mountains & History above a stunning Coast, which gives you the freedom to do all the walks, or opt for alternatives in the area.

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